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Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 1 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on 31 July 2003 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under item 25 (a).

(*Signed*) Revaz **Adamia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 1 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: Russian]

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

On 26 July 2003, the motor ship Vega-1 completed the maritime voyage Sukhumi-Sochi-Sukhumi. According to the available information, there are plans to organize regular maritime service between Sochi and Sukhumi, and, in particular, it is intended to effect three trips per week.

The motor ship Vega-1 flagrantly violated the legislation of Georgia, including the Criminal Code (illegal crossing of the State border and breach of customs rules), and decree No. 140 of the President of Georgia of 31 January 1996 on the closure of the Sukhumi seaport and port points, the maritime area and the section of the State border lying within Abkhazia, Georgia, for all forms of international transport, of which the Russian side was duly informed.

The Russian side, which had at its disposal information concerning the departure of the motor ship Vega-1 from the port of Sukhumi, did not notify the Georgian side of the presence of the violator vessel in a Russian Federation port, thereby actually assisting it in evading the punishment stipulated under Georgian legislation and international law.

Such actions by the Russian side are incompatible with the principles of good neighbourliness between the two States, the requirements of international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the provisions of the Agreement between the Governments of Georgia and the Russian Federation on Commercial Navigation.

Such actions by the Russian side are in flagrant violation of the provisions of the Memorandum on the maintenance of peace and stability in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) of 10 February 1995 and the decision of the CIS Council of Heads of State on measures for the settlement [of the conflict] in Abkhazia, Georgia, of 19 January 1996 and constitute virtual approval of the initiation of maritime service with the so-called "Republic of Abkhazia", which, together with other illegal and unilateral steps, particularly the establishment of a simplified procedure for crossing the border on the Abkhaz section of the Georgian-Russian border, the granting of Russian citizenship to inhabitants of Abkhazia, Georgia, the resumption of the rail service and so forth, is a continuation of the policy of all-round support for the separatist regime in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia reiterates that the Sukhumi seaport and port points, the maritime area and the section of the State border lying within Abkhazia, Georgia, are closed for all forms of international transport, with the exception of shipments of humanitarian aid, in accordance with the established rules. Should similar illegal actions recur, the Georgian side demands that it be notified immediately and that the violator vessels be detained pending an appropriate response by the Georgian side.

Tbilisi, 31 July 2003